



**Executive Board
of the
United Nations
Development Programme
and of the
United Nations
Population Fund**

Distr.
GENERAL

DP/FPA/1997/1
5 November 1996

ORIGINAL: English

First regular session 1997
13-17 January 1997, New York
Item 2 of the provisional agenda
UNFPA

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

**REQUEST FOR EXTENSION, AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR,
THE UNFPA COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR NICARAGUA**

I. BACKGROUND

1. UNFPA requests that its programme of assistance for Nicaragua be extended by one year through the end of 1997. The primary aim of the extension is to harmonize the programme cycle with that of UNDP and to develop the next programme in close consultation with the new Government, which will take office in January 1997. UNFPA also requests that the funding authority for the programme be increased by \$4 million. This will cover an overexpenditure of \$0.7 million in 1996 and provide \$3.3 million for 1997, \$2 million from regular resources and \$1.3 million that will be sought from multi-bilateral sources. The additional resources will be used to implement ongoing projects in 1997 within the framework of the country programme as approved by the Executive Board in June 1994. The additional funding authority will also facilitate the transition to the next programme of assistance, which is planned to be presented to the Executive Board at its third regular session in September 1997.

2. In June 1994, the Executive Board approved the fourth UNFPA country programme for Nicaragua in the amount of \$5.5 million over a three-year period, 1994-1996, of which \$3.4 million were to be provided from regular resources and \$2.1 million from multi-bilateral resources, or from regular resources, if then available. In the event, only \$0.7 million in multi-bilateral resources became available, and UNFPA financed the balance of \$1.4 million from regular resources, bringing total estimated expenditures for 1994-1996 to \$5.5 million from regular resources and \$0.7 million from multi-bilateral resources.

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3. The current request of an additional authority of \$4 million, thus, includes an expected over-expenditure of \$0.7 million in 1996 and \$3.3 million in spending authority for 1997. Approval of the extension and additional resources would bring the total approval authority for the period 1994-1997 to \$9.5 million. This request for extension is presented according to the work plan categories in force when the original country programme was approved. The proposed activities, however, take into account the transition to the core programme areas of UNFPA as endorsed by the Executive Board in decision 95/15. The implementation of the current programme has demonstrated that the country's absorptive capacity has increased substantially compared with that during the period of the previous programme.

4. All activities during the extended period would be undertaken in accordance with the principles and objectives of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which was endorsed by the General Assembly through its resolution 49/128.

II. PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

5. The current programme has had several notable achievements. For example, it helped to strengthen human resources in the area of reproductive health through training at the local level; increase national execution; further decentralize the UNFPA-assisted programme; promote coordination with other donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the implementation of the programme; and increase the absorptive capacity of the country, as evidenced by the increased implementation rate noted above.

6. The proposed extension will help to consolidate these achievements and ensure that future UNFPA assistance will effectively respond to needs of the country and the priorities of the new Government. It will help promote collaboration among United Nations organizations, whose programmes are concentrated in four northern regions: Nueva Segovia, Leon, Matagalpa and Jinotega. It will also facilitate government efforts to conceptualize reproductive health and provide comprehensive services accordingly.

7. In order to consolidate current achievements and to re-orient the programme towards the goals of the ICPD, the programme will continue to: (a) build national capacity in reproductive health with the aim of improving the quality of reproductive health and family planning services and the effectiveness of information, education and communication (IEC) interventions; (b) further advance the decentralization process and promote community participation; (c) ensure the appropriate integration of the gender perspective and sociocultural aspects into all UNFPA-supported activities; and (d) collect appropriate baseline data to help measure the impact of UNFPA assistance for Nicaragua.

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8. The major achievements in the area of maternal and child health and family planning (MCH/FP) include: (a) improved technical skills of medical personnel at the local level; (b) increased participation of NGOs and local communities; and (c) increased provision of reproductive health information and services, including to adolescents. With the support of the Ministry of Health and selected NGOs, the proposed programme extension will further improve the coverage and quality of MCH/FP services and facilitate the transition to an integrated reproductive health care approach. The longer term aim is to make comprehensive reproductive health services available to all Nicaraguans, and in particular to rural women and adolescents.

9. The programme will assist in providing training to community health workers and technical assistance to the masters' degree programme in reproductive health at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua; in providing contraceptives and strengthening the logistics management of such contraceptives; in establishing referral services in reproductive health; and in producing data in the area of reproductive health and promoting its use. In so doing, the programme will promote the participation of NGOs, community organizations and males.

10. Another major achievement of the current programme has been the formulation of the National Population Policy, which was approved by the country's Social Cabinet in May 1996. The policy was the product of extensive debates and discussions involving a wide range of participants including the Government, NGOs, community organizations, the private sector, labour unions and religious organizations. As a result, awareness of population and development issues has increased among policy and decision makers as well as communities. Currently, a plan of action is being developed to facilitate the implementation of the policy.

11. Assistance provided under the extended programme will support the efforts of the Ministry of Social Action to implement the National Population Policy in collaboration with other ministries, NGOs and community organizations. It will also support government advocacy efforts in support of the policy.

12. The UNFPA-assisted programme was instrumental in undertaking the country's first population census in 24 years. The results, which became available in October 1996, will be a valuable tool in the formulation and evaluation of socio-economic development programmes at both the national and local levels. The programme will continue to help to: (a) provide useful information for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of population and development policies and programmes; (b) deepen the understanding of the links among population, education, health, poverty, well-being, environment and development, and gender; and (c) strengthen the capacity of municipalities to manage, analyse and use socio-demographic information and to incorporate population components into local development plans and programmes. Assistance will thus be provided to: disseminate census results; conduct socio-demographic studies; establish databases;

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strengthen demographic information networks at national, regional and local levels; and provide requisite training to municipalities.

13. Efforts in the area of IEC helped to increase awareness of population and development issues and of reproductive health concepts and to include advocacy components in most programme activities. Under the proposed programme extension, UNFPA will continue to provide assistance to the Government's advocacy activities aimed at: (a) promoting the new Government's commitments to the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the National Population Policy; (b) increasing the school enrolment of females; and (c) promoting the participation of grass-roots organizations and of adolescents in population activities. A related aim will be to sensitize journalists to population issues and to train them in reporting on population and related issues.

14. Under the proposed programme extension, national execution will be further promoted. The Programme will be monitored by the Ministry of External Cooperation and the Ministry of Social Action and by UNFPA. A programme review and strategy development (PRSD) exercise will be carried out in early 1997.

15. The activities of the proposed programme extension will complement those of the major donors active in Nicaragua both in terms of programme area and geographic coverage. Most major donors mainly support primary health care programmes in which the reproductive health components are limited to providing antenatal and perinatal care and monitoring maternal mortality. Only Germany and the United States contribute to such reproductive health components as family planning and the provision of contraceptives. Norway and Finland are considering approving reproductive health projects. The capacity of the UNFPA country office in Nicaragua to attract multi-bilateral funding has improved significantly over the past few years. The country office has been negotiating with Norway, Finland, Luxembourg and the European Union to obtain multi-bilateral funds of \$4.4 million for the 1997-1999 period.

16. As noted in paragraph 1, UNFPA proposes to extend the country programme for Nicaragua through 1997 and to increase the funding authority by \$4 million. This would bring the UNFPA programme of assistance for the period 1994-1997 to a total of \$9.5 million. The following table shows how that amount would be accommodated by programme areas (in millions of \$):

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Sectors	Approved by Executive Board, 1994-1996		Estimated expenditures 1994-1996		Additional spending authority 1994-1997		Total 1994-1997	
	Regular resources	Multi-bi resources	Regular resources	Multi-bi resources	Regular resources	Multi-bi resources	Regular resources	Multi-bi resources
Maternal and child health and family planning	1.5	0.8	3.6	0.9*	3.5	1.4	5.0	2.2
Information, education and communication	0.5	-	0.5	-	0.2	-	0.7	-
Data collection and analysis	1.0	1.0	0.6	-	(0.3)	(1.00)	0.7	-
Population dynamics	0.1	0.15	0.1	-	0.1	-	0.2	-
Population policy formulation	0.1	-	0.4	-	0.4	(0.15)	0.5	-
Women, population and development	0.1	0.15	0.1	-	0.1	(0.15)	0.2	-
Programme reserve	0.1	-	-	-	(0.1)	-	-	-
Total	3.4	2.1	5.3	0.9	3.9	0.1	7.3	2.2

* May include IEC activities and women, population and development efforts under MCH/FP.

III. RECOMMENDATION

17. The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board approve the extension of the Nicaragua country programme by one year until the end of 1997, and increase the funding authority of the programme by \$4 million to cover the overexpenditure of \$0.7 million in 1996 and \$3.3 million for 1997, subject to the availability of resources.
